



GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET

ROYAL PARKS

Conservation Area

41



City of Westminster

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND CITY DEVELOPMENT
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING SERVICES MAY 2004**

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Designation: Designated in 1990, to include Hyde Park, St James's Park, Green Park and Buckingham Palace Gardens and Kensington Gardens (east of the boundary between the City of Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea).

Historical Background: The history of the Royal Parks is intimately linked to the possession of the land by the Crown. Hyde Park, named after the ancient manor of Hyde, was originally Abbey land which was seized and enclosed as a deer park at the time of Henry VIII. In the 16th century the park was used for hunting but was opened to the public in 1637. Landscaping began in 1728 when Charles Bridgeman laid out the formal paths in Kensington Gardens, taking almost 300 acres from Hyde Park.

In 1730 the Serpentine was made by damming the Westbourne, but little else was done in Hyde Park until Buckingham House (1705) was extended by John Nash to become Buckingham Palace in 1825-30. As part of the general upgrading of the area Decimus Burton replaced the brick wall around the park with railings, erected several gate lodges, the Screen at Hyde Park Corner (1825) and the arch at Hyde Park Corner (1846). In addition the five-arched bridge across the Serpentine was erected to the designs of George Rennie in 1826. In 1851 the Crystal Palace was erected along the south side of Hyde Park as the venue of the Great Exhibition. The gates erected by the Coalbrookdale Company for the Great Exhibition survive to the east of the Albert Memorial.

John Nash's upgrading of Buckingham Palace was an expensive fiasco and Edward Blore took over in 1830. In 1847 he designed the east range of Buckingham Palace (facing down the Mall) and the triumphal gateway which Nash had erected in front of the Palace was moved to Marble Arch.

The east range of the Palace was re-clad by Sir Aston Webb in 1913 to complement the lavish piers, gates and railings of his extravagant rondpoint (1901) in front of the Palace. Together with Admiralty Arch and the Victoria Memorial (both of 1911), this ensemble makes up the most dramatic Beaux-Arts set-piece in London.

The Mall, a great Baroque avenue linking Admiralty Arch to Buckingham Palace, was originally laid out by Charles II in 1660-2 when he enlarged St James's Palace following the burning of Whitehall Palace. At the same time the Thames marshland which made up St James's Park was drained and a straight canal, about half a mile long, was created. Green Park (originally Upper St James's Park) and the present gardens of Buckingham Palace were added to the Royal domain shortly afterwards and fashionable London grew up around the parks. St James's Park was always open to the public, but Green Park was only opened in 1826. At the same time the rather neglected Baroque canal in St James's Park was remodelled as a picturesque lake. ,

In more recent years, the most radical intervention in the Parks has been the widening of Park Lane. Park Lane was originally a Georgian street, which at its south end ran along the line of today's Old Park Lane. In 1960-61, however, Park Lane was widened and diverted at the south end to enter Hyde Park Corner by the side of Apsley House. This destroyed a terrace containing houses by Alfred Waterhouse and it isolated Apsley House (by Robert Adam, 1771-8) in a way that was never intended.

Listed Buildings: There are about 60 listed buildings in the Conservation Area. Of these, 7 are listed Grade II* and 11 are listed Grade I. There are also numerous listed lamp posts in West Carriage Drive, Rotten Row, Serpentine Row, Green Park, Constitution Hill, St James's Park and Birdcage Walk.

Key Features: With limited exceptions, the Royal Parks are the creation of the essentially Picturesque landscaping tradition of the mid 18th- mid 19th century. Hyde Park and St James's Park are dominated by their lakes. All the parks are well wooded and many paths in Green Park and Hyde Park are laid out as avenues. There is also informal planting in all the Parks. The Parks are the

lungs and playgrounds of Central London and provide a beautiful and natural setting for the buildings which surround them.

In general, the surrounding buildings enhance the Parks. The aristocratic houses and palaces on the east side of Green Park and north side of St James's Park, the government buildings at the east end of St James's Park, the town houses along the Bayswater Road and Knightsbridge, the Albert Hall and Memorial and the mansion blocks along Park Lane, all create distinctive areas and characters around the borders of the Parks. Some of these buildings also form dramatic backgrounds in long views from the Parks. The views from the bridge over the Serpentine and the bridge over the lake in St James's Park are particularly fine. Only occasionally has out of scale modern development detracted from the appearance of the Parks.

Adjacent Conservation Areas: The Parks are bounded by the Bayswater, Mayfair, St James's, Whitehall, Birdcage Walk, Grosvenor Gardens, Belgravia, Albert Gate, Knightsbridge Green, Knightsbridge, Queensgate (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) and Kensington Palace (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) Conservation Areas.

Strategic Views: The east end of St James's Park lies within the Primrose Hill to Palace of Westminster and King Henry VIII's mound to St Paul's, strategic views.

Areas of Special Archaeological Priority: The boundary of the Ludenwic and Thorney Island area of special archaeological priority runs along the outside edge of the west pavement of Horse Guards Road.

Regulation 7 Directions: Not affected.

Design Briefs and Guidelines: None.

Spaces protected by the London Squares Act 1931: None

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens: Kensington Gardens (Grade I), Hyde Park (Grade I), St James's Park (Grade I), Buckingham Palace Gardens (Grade II*), Green Park (Grade II)

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